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PREVENTION OF DISCRIMINATION

Report of the Regional Seminar on Afro-descendants in the Americas (La Ceiba, Honduras, 21-24 March 2002)

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* Reproduced in the original language only.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Regional Seminar on Afro-descendants in the Americas was held in La Ceiba, Honduras, from 21 to 24 March 2002. The proposal to hold regional seminars on minority issues had been made by the Working Group on Minorities and endorsed in resolution 2000/16 of the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights. The seminar was organized by the Working Group on Minorities and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in cooperation with Organización de Desarrollo Etnico Comunitario (ODECO), based in La Ceiba. Forty-seven Afro-descendant representatives from 19 countries participated in the seminar. The International Human Rights Law Group and Inter-American Institute for Human Rights were also represented. The list of participants is contained in annex II.

2. The objectives of the seminar were:

To analyse the current situation of Afro-descendants in the Americas and in particular Latin America, bearing in mind the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities of 1992;

To discuss and share experiences on the autonomy and integration of Afro-descendant communities in different countries; and

To provide concrete and practical recommendations to OHCHR and the Working Group on Minorities on how they might address Afro-descendant rights, bearing in mind the Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.

3. The following background papers were prepared for the seminar:

An analysis of the outcome of the Santiago de Chile preparatory conference and the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action in relation to the Afro-descendant issue by Ms. Edna Maria Santos Roland;

A strategy to combat racism in Latin America in relation to Afro-descendant communities, by the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights;

Country experiences of Afro-descendant communities:

(a) Autonomy and its limits for the Afro-descendant community in Nicaragua;

(b) The political participation of the Afro-descendant community in the last presidential election in Honduras; and

(c) The situation and perspective of the Afro-descendant community in Uruguay.

II. OPENING OF THE SEMINAR

4. The seminar was opened by Mr. Gonzalo Rivera Ocampo, Mayor of La Ceiba, who welcomed the participants to Honduras and to his city. Mr. Celeo Alvarez Casildo, president of ODECO, also welcomed the participants and emphasized the significance of the issues to be discussed at the seminar. He looked forward to a fruitful exchange of views and noted in particular, the importance of the event as it was the first follow-up to the World Conference against Racism.

5. Mr. Roberto Garretón, Regional Advisor for Latin America and the Caribbean for OHCHR, expressed his appreciation to the Honduran hosts of the seminar. He continued by referring to the way in which the United Nations had covered the issue of racial discrimination. He noted that the Organization had, from its inception, condemned racism and had created numerous standards and mechanisms to combat the practice. He underlined the need for a constructive debate that would bring practical and focused recommendations.

6. The participants introduced themselves and described the work of their organizations. At the recommendation of Mr. Romero Rodriguez, a participant from Uruguay, the participants selected Mr. Celeo Alvarez of ODECO as Chairman and Ms. Edna Maria Santos Roland, President of Fala Preta - Organização de Mulheres Negras, Brazil, as the Rapporteur of the meeting.

III. OVERVIEW AND CURRENT SITUATION OF AFRO-DESCENDANT COMMUNITIES IN THE AMERICAS

7. Under the first item of the agenda, Mr. José Bengoa, a member of the Working Group on Minorities gave the keynote speech. He said the Working Group on Minorities was one of the only forums where Afro-descendant issues could be discussed. He pointed out that it was important that the participants used the international mechanisms available to protect their rights and he was pleased that Mr. Garretón had referred to them. He looked forward to the debate and encouraged the participants to share their experiences and perspectives. He observed that Latin America often saw itself as a region where racism did not exist owing to its mixture of cultures. He believed that that notion came from the Independence period when the new nations were founded on the concept of citizenship, not diversity. However, while a system of castes composed of Criollos with Spanish roots and Mestizos had developed, the new cultures of Latin America had been formed from fragments of different traditions, including those of Afro-Latinos. Nevertheless, he maintained, since the nineteenth century, Criollo groups, in particular young people, had continued to be obsessed with "whiteness". In Brazil, he noted, writers such as Darcy Ribeiro and Gilberto Freyre had offered an image of a country attempting to synthesize its races. However, he argued, such views were not valid. Segregation and marginalization were realities for Afro-descendants, as was their exclusion from power. Mr. Bengoa said he believed that the way to combat such racism was to make the Afro-descendant issue visible. He argued that the emergence of the Afro-descendant issue was the most important development in Latin America in the previous 10 years. He concluded by saying that the Working Group on Minorities was there not only to listen, but also to help find solutions.

8. Mr. Dario Solano (Fundación Afrocimarrón, Dominican Republic) thanked Mr. Bengoa for his statement and said that he was unhappy with the concept of "minorities" because classification as a minority seemed to weaken rather than empower. He also referred to Afro-descendant struggles in the Caribbean and ideas of "negritude" that he believed were important. He said that the dream of his people was not to be equal but to be respected as different.

9. Mr. Silis Muhammed (CureAFRE, United States of America) gave his definition of Afro-descendants as peoples who had their roots in Africa, had been forcibly transported to the Americas for slavery and had experienced the loss of their original identity, language and religion, and discrimination.

10. Mr. Melvin Brown (Respuesta Afropanameña, Panama) said that neo-colonialism could be defined as a new form of racism, since Afro-descendants remain a source of cheap labour. Mr. Donald Allen (Asociación Proyecto Caribe, Costa Rica) added that in many Latin American countries, legal instruments were used to discriminate against Afro-descendant communities, thereby excluding them socially, politically and economically. To address the common difficulties and regional discrimination, all Afro-descendant people should consider themselves as "one people" and not as a "minority". He mentioned that the Afro-descendant population in the region, which numbered approximately 150 million, shared a common history of slavery. Further, although Afro-descendant people had mixed with indigenous people and other people of the region, they had successfully preserved and developed their identity and should work together to find new and effective ways to combat racism and discrimination.

11. Other participants, including Mr. Silis Muhammed and Ms. Erica Lawson (African Canadian Legal Clinic), recalled that Afro-descendant concerns and voices had been heard by the international community throughout the Santiago preparatory meeting and the Durban Conference itself, and that Afro-descendant issues were receiving increasing coverage at the United Nations, in the area of human rights. However, they expressed the view that the ongoing dialogue with the international community and the United Nations should include all communities of Afro-descendant peoples, including those of North America, the Caribbean region and Latin America.

12. Ms. Gisela Arandia (Union de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba) and Mr. Romero Rodriguez (Mundo Afro, Uruguay) made a joint presentation. Ms. Arandia identified four key areas relevant to the discussion of Afro-descendants: globalization, poverty, marginalization and education. She argued that the process of globalization had contributed to increased poverty. She said that Afro-descendants needed to develop a strategy based on their own philosophy to confront this reality. The solutions, in her view, should be economically sustainable and based on a national unity which took account of cultural diversity. She said that the United Nations could be a useful partner in their work, in particular in promoting education.

13. Mr. Romero Rodriguez said that Afro-descendants had significantly raised the profile of their issues. He referred to the World Conference against Racism where Afro-descendants had played a critical role. The Afro-descendant issue also needed to be taken up by the Working Group on Minorities. Mr. Rodriguez referred to the initiatives led by the Afro-descendant movement in Honduras, in particular their demands that presidential candidates make specific

electoral pledges regarding their plans to advance Afro-descendant interests should they be elected. He also expressed concern about globalization and the impact of structural adjustment policies on the poorest groups in society. He noted that currency devaluations, such as those in Argentina, often had a disproportionate impact on Afro-descendants. Finally, he presented a number of proposals for the recommendations, including suggestions that more data should be gathered on Afro-descendants and that UNESCO should consider recognizing areas with which Afro-descendants had strong historical and cultural links as World Heritage sites.

14. Several participants said that education was the key to advancement for Afro-descendants. A number of participants also referred to the need to revive Afro-descendant cultures which had been largely hidden. Mr. Dario contended that Afro-descendants should assess the type and quality of education they received. Access to capital and technology was also emphasized as a key issue for the development of Afro-descendants.

15. Ms. Fidelia Graand-Galon (Women's Maroon Network, Suriname) spoke about her own people, the Maroon community of Suriname, and said she found many similarities between their situation and that described by other participants. There were schools available for her community, but generally the quality was poor. If young people had the opportunity to go to university, they often declined it because of the distance and costs. She also spoke about the health situation in the region and the growing impact of AIDS. Further, she mentioned that there was some discrimination within her community, mainly because some people had adopted the thought processes of the "creators of racism".

16. Ms. Edna Maria Santos Roland spoke about the use of the terms "blacks" and "Afro-descendants". She said that at Durban her people had presented themselves as Afro-descendants. She noted that in order to combat the stereotype one either needed to change the word or change the sense of the word and in Brazil the latter had been the strategy of the Black Movement. In her country young people were proud to be black but, in the interests of finding a common platform in Latin America, there had been agreement to use the term Afro-descendant. In conclusion, she argued for greater statistical information about communities and support for programmes of affirmative action that were being developed in Brazil as a result of the Durban Conference.

IV. COUNTRY EXPERIENCES IN RELATION TO THE DECLARATION ON MINORITIES AND THE DURBAN CONFERENCE

17. Ms. Edna Maria Santos Roland made a presentation about the World Conference against Racism, comparing the texts of the Santiago, Dakar and Durban preparatory conferences with regard to three issues: Afro-descendants, affirmative action and reparations. She commented that the final text of the Declaration and Programme of Action included most of the text drafted at the regional meeting in Santiago concerning Afro-descendants. She considered that despite some ambiguity, the Durban Conference had produced new language regarding reparations. She maintained that the Durban Programme of Action considered affirmative or positive action as a very important strategy to promote equality. She noted the sections that underlined the importance of capacity-building and spoke about the recommendations calling for positive action. In Brazil, a number of affirmative action initiatives were being developed and draft

legislation regarding a quota for Afro-descendants at universities had been approved by the State of Rio de Janeiro. A corresponding federal law was being discussed. She believed that it was necessary in Brazil, where the representation of Afro-descendants at universities was lower than in South Africa under apartheid.

18. Mr. Gilda Pacheco (Inter-American Institute for Human Rights) spoke of the impact of the Durban Conference on the Institute's strategy in combating racism. She introduced the new web-site page in follow-up to the Durban Programme of Action. It had been designed to combat discrimination. She also presented some of the Institute's recent publications and activities on the same issue. She said that the Institute was for all Latin American people and that the support of civil society was vital to the Institute's work. Therefore, she invited NGOs from Afro-descendant communities to continue their support and contributions to the Institute and to provide the new web site with additional valuable information.

19. Mr. Sidney Francis (Asociación de Desarollo y Promoción, Nicaragua) outlined the history of the Autonomous Regions of the Atlantic Coast in Nicaragua. For historical reasons, he said, Nicaragua had originally been divided administratively into two major regions; the Pacific Coast ruled by the Spanish, with a homogeneous Spanish-speaking population, and the Atlantic Coast ruled by the British. The first Autonomous Government of the Atlantic Coast had been established in 1861 by the British colonial government and reviewed in 1994, 1998 and 2002. The population of the latter region was composed of six ethnic groups, each with its own language. His community, the Garifuna community, was one of those groups.

20. Mr. Francis referred to current concerns about the arrangements for the autonomous territory in Nicaragua. The Autonomous Government was controlled by national rather than locally based political parties. He also said that the existing administrative structure failed to recognize the concept of "ethnic democracy". He added that the division of the autonomous territory into departments and municipalities simply ensured State control rather than the delegation of decision-making to local people. Further, he felt that lack of political interest and technical support from the national Government had contributed to the current poverty of the region, despite its rich natural resources. He noted that the autonomous territory continued to be segregated from the Nicaraguan national territory and remained one of the poorest parts of the country. He concluded that autonomy had responded more to external needs than to those of the local population. Therefore, Mr. Francis argued, the national Government should take effective measures to guarantee the autonomy of the Atlantic region, the effective participation of local people in political life, and the social and economic development of local communities.

21. Given the paradox and difficulties encountered by the autonomous area of the Atlantic coast in Nicaragua, some participants asked whether the relevant treaty considered self-determination for the local population. They felt that that fundamental right should be central in any plan of autonomy.

22. The Rev. Glyn Nelson Jemmott (México Negro) asked about the definition of Afro-Nicaraguan people, one of the communities living in the region, and whether the principle of self-identification was respected in the process of autonomy. He also asked if there had been any review of the impact of autonomy on the local population, including Afro-Nicaraguans,

whether the traditional process of participation had been integrated into the process of autonomy and whether there were any positive experiences concerning education for the community within the autonomous framework.

23. Mr. Francis responded that, unfortunately, he had not had time to investigate those specific issues. He said that the autonomy of the Atlantic coast in Nicaragua was based on arrangements made decades earlier and definitely needed to be reviewed. He indicated that numerous studies focusing on Afro-descendants and autonomy were available in academic institutions and he agreed that that information should be shared with the community.

24. Under the same item, Mr. Celeo Alvarez made a presentation on the involvement of Afro-descendants in the presidential elections in Honduras in early 2002. The candidates had all been asked to make election pledges to the Garifuna community and those pledges had been signed and witnessed. He said that he planned to ask the new President to fulfil his election pledges. He then identified some of the issues facing his people. In the political area, there were no Afro-descendants in the 128-member Parliament. He noted also that, although Afro-descendant peoples constituted 10 per cent of the population, only 3 per cent of them had access to higher education. Regarding land title, there had been little progress in returning lands to Afro-descendant peoples.

25. Mr. Gustavo Makanaky (Movimiento Nacional por los Derechos Humanos de las Comunidades Negras de Colombia) said the participation of the Afro-descendant community of Honduras in the Honduran presidential election was relevant to other communities. He congratulated ODECO for the agreement made between the Garifuna community and the presidential candidates that had effectively put Afro-descendant issues on the agenda of the election.

26. Mr. Carlos Alberto Ivanir dos Santos (Centro de Articulação de Mulheres Negras, Brazil) gave a presentation under the title "Participatory Budget Scheme: democracy is built with democracy". He provided information about the experiences of participatory budgeting begun in Porto Alegre in Brazil in 1989. The principle was to stimulate the participation of all citizens of the city in the municipal council sessions throughout the year so that they could participate in decisions on the allocation of public funding. He said that since 1990, about 45,000 people in Porto Alegre had been involved through 16 regional plenary sessions and 6 thematic plenary sessions and other relevant sessions of the municipality. Through the Participatory Budget Council, citizens' representatives could participate in making budgetary proposals. The exercise, he noted, had transformed the relationship between public power and civil society because it offered a transparent understanding of public policy and provided citizens with instruments to participate more effectively in the decision-making process regarding the allotment of public funding. Until 2001, another 70 cities in the country had adopted a similar practice.

27. Mr. dos Santos said that despite the obvious success of the Participatory Budget Scheme, the participation of disadvantaged groups, including Afro-Brazilians, had been limited, if not excluded. Reasons for this, he said, included the lack of a public policy of encouraging the Afro-Brazilian community to participate and the lack of a strong NGO in the community to

lobby for this purpose. Thus, he believed, more needed to be done to encourage and facilitate the Afro-Brazilian community to become involved in that form of democratic public management, given the Budget Scheme's significant impact on society.

28. Mr. Ivanir dos Santos then called upon Afro-Brazilian NGOs to raise awareness of the Participatory Budget Scheme in communities, thereby helping them to participate effectively in social and political life at the local level.

29. After asking some specific and technical questions concerning the management of the Participatory Budget Scheme, fiscal policy and municipal autonomy, the participants concluded that the "invisibility" of the Afro-descendant community, although it represented about half of the population of the country, was the main reason for their absence from the process.

30. The general opinion was that Afro-descendant involvement in social and political decision-making at local and national levels was essential for development and, therefore, the Participatory Budget Scheme, if carried out effectively, would be an excellent way for the Afro-descendant community in Brazil to become more involved in the political process.

V. CONCLUSION OF THE SEMINAR AND ADOPTION OF THE DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

31. The participants designated a committee to work with the Rapporteur to collect recommendations from all participants on the basis of the discussion and present them to the seminar for adoption. The declaration and recommendations are contained in annex I.

32. Following the adoption of the declaration and recommendations, the Chairperson thanked the participants, OHCHR and the Working Group on Minorities for their contribution to the successful outcome of the seminar. He asked the participants and the Rapporteur to finalize the recommendations, taking into account the suggestions made, and to ensure the widest possible dissemination of the seminar's outcome.

33. At the closing meeting, Mr. José Bengoa, on behalf of the Working Group on Minorities warmly thanked all the participants and ODECO for their valuable contribution to the seminar and reaffirmed the support of the Working Group for Afro-descendant communities in their efforts for the protection and promotion of their rights. He stressed that in addition to the spirit and identity of Afro-descendant communities, the cultural diversity of different communities should be considered in any discussion concerning human rights.

34. Mr. Julian Burger, on behalf of OHCHR, thanked the Government of Honduras, ODECO and the participants for their active support and involvement. He said that the recommendations contained several proposals for follow-up by the United Nations and he hoped that they would be implemented. He considered that the seminar had been a success and that it was a good first step in implementing the Programme of Action of the World Conference against Racism.

35. Dr. Ramón Hernández, Minister of Justice of Honduras, closed the seminar. In his speech, Dr. Hernández announced that the Government of Honduras had decided to ratify the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

Annex I

Declaration and recommendations
of the
Regional Seminar on Afro-descendants in the Americas
(La Ceiba, Honduras, 21-24 March 2002)

We the participants in the Regional Seminar on Afro-descendants in the Americas call upon the Governments of the Americas, those of Latin America in particular, to recognize and respect the rights of Afro-descendant people living within their States.

We the participants wish to note that Afro-descendant people of the Americas share a common ancestral relationship to Africa. Furthermore, we have successfully preserved our ancestral roots, as well as developed our identity as Afro-descendants.

For a long time, Afro-descendant people have faced exclusion from political and developmental processes in many countries and remain vulnerable to national policies that fail to respect either their cultural specificity or their contribution to the history and development of the region. They have been "invisible" in the society despite their population of over 140 million in the region.

We the participants, wish to stress that the respect and promotion of the rights of Afro-descendant people, who have contributed to worldwide cultural diversity, is an integral part of human rights. Furthermore, we recognize that through their active participation in the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance Afro-descendant people successfully demonstrated their willingness and capacity to participate and meet the challenges of today's world. We also consider that the future of the Americas depends upon the full participation of all the invisible groups of people, including Afro-descendant people, in all aspects of life, but especially in decision-making at all levels of society.

Therefore, we the participants in the seminar call upon:

Governments

To recognize, including in the Constitutions of their countries, Afro-descendant people and that the countries of the Americas are multicultural and multi-ethnic societies;

To address the issue of ethnic/racial origin in national censuses and other population surveys with a focus on social indicators, including education, health, housing, income and employment indicators, in order to formulate adequate social policy to reduce the disparities between Afro-descendant communities and the wider population;

To support studies on Afro-descendant communities with a view to raising the visibility of these communities;

To collect disaggregated data and information on disadvantaged Afro-descendant communities in order to design future policy on the promotion and protection of the rights of Afro-descendant people;

To guarantee free and universal access to pre-school in the 0 to 6-year-old age group, and basic education for all citizens, including Afro-descendant communities;

To undertake further measures with a view to offering universal access to secondary school and improving access to higher education for Afro-descendant communities through the design and implementation of affirmative action programmes,

To include the study of the history of Afro-descendant communities and their contribution to the region in educational programmes and school curricula;

To design and implement effective measures to guarantee equitable access to employment, public housing, safe water and sewerage, health care and public services for Afro-descendant communities;

To follow-up the Durban and Santiago Declarations and Programmes of Action in relation to Afro-descendant communities;

To give priority to implementing paragraph 116 of the Santiago and paragraph 13 of the Durban Programme of Action to resolve the problem of ownership of lands ancestrally occupied by Afro-descendants;

To elaborate and implement appropriate laws to judge people inciting hatred or racial violence through traditional means and/or the use of new communications such as the Internet;

To collaborate effectively with United Nations human rights mechanisms by providing information and disaggregated data pertaining to Afro-descendant communities and by creating a databank.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

To organize training programmes for the youth and leaders of Afro-descendant communities on United Nations human rights mechanisms;

To include concrete measures in the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education to combat racial discrimination against Afro-descendants;

To support the establishment of a research institution, located in an area with a large Afro-descendant population, with the following functions:

To promote the investigation of past and present historical, sociological and cultural aspects of the presence of African and Afro-descendant populations on the American Continent and in the Caribbean, including local, regional, national, and international perspectives;

To publish studies on the popular, cultural and intellectual heritage of Afro-descendants on the American Continent and in the Caribbean and promotion of these studies via workshops and seminars;

To foster dialogue between Afro-descendant organizations, institutions and communities at national and regional levels;

To train community and regional leaders, and members of civil society organizations who work among Afro-descendant populations, in the cultural, organizational and communication techniques required to create and evaluate programmes for the development of Afro-descendant populations;

To design and execute a programme of formal and distance education on Afro-descendant issues, in collaboration with reputable international academic institutions dedicated to the issue of Afro-descendants, with the purpose of fortifying local development processes and extending the access of community and regional actors to relevant information for development;

Stimulating the creation of regional networks of management, implementation and evaluation of projects;

Establish a databank containing indicators of discrimination against Afro-descendants in the education, employment, health, housing and public service fields.

Working Group on Minorities

To continue to support regional initiatives to disseminate all information relating to Afro-descendant communities in the countries concerned;

To support a regional initiative to measure, in each country, the real access that Afro-descendants have to information relevant to their communities and their ability to disseminate their beliefs, in accordance with article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;

To study and examine whether the concept of "minorities" is appropriately adapted to the resolution of the problems faced by Afro-descendants;

To guarantee the participation of Afro-descendant representatives in international forums such as the Earth Summit, the World Summit and the World Social Forum;

To organize, in collaboration with NGOs and Governments, follow-up seminars and training on human rights in subregions of Latin America, with the aims of:

Deepening analysis of the situation of Afro-descendants on the American continent and in the Caribbean;

Broadening the scope of proposals;

Advancing the level of cooperation between different actors in any agreed programme;

Building the foundations for implementation of agreed proposals;

To create an interdisciplinary advisory team for the Working Group composed of members of Afro-descendant civil organizations.

Commission on Human Rights

Nomination of a special rapporteur on Afro-descendant communities, whose mandate would include:

Study of the slavery of Afro-descendants and its consequences;

Pursuit of the implementation of resolution III of the World Conference against Racism;

Evaluation of how globalization has affected Afro-descendants, especially in relation to the problematic issue of migration;

Examination of the relevance of the work of other mechanisms of the United Nations system to Afro-descendants.

To promote the use of available statistical information in the areas of access to social services, health, education and housing;

To create a United Nations presence in zones of armed conflicts, considering that in these zones Afro-descendants are constantly victims of violence;

To direct Special Rapporteurs with relevant mandates to pay particular attention to the constant and disproportionate detention of Afro-descendants and the selection of crime suspects based on ethnic-racial profiles.

Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

To urge States to include in their reports disaggregated data concerning Afro-descendant communities and to make recommendations regarding issues relating to them;

To urge the States to inform Afro-descendant communities of recommendations and plans of action that affect them;

To organize, in cooperation with the Working Group on Minorities, training for Afro-descendant NGOs on the submission of reports;

To encourage and invite Afro-descendant NGOs to submit periodic reports.

UNESCO

To involve more Afro-descendant communities of Latin-America and the Caribbean in the Slave Route project, with a view to raising international awareness of the history of these communities;

To organize a seminar, in cooperation with the Working Group on Minorities, that will address the social and historical perspectives of issues facing Afro-descendants;

To disseminate Afro-descent culture, using all forms of mass media, throughout national communities and in the international arena;

To design a special programme addressing the situation of education in Afro-descendant communities.

UNDP, UNIFEM, UNICEF

To incorporate issues of Afro-descendant communities in national development and health programmes, particularly in policy for the eradication of poverty;

To design a specific development programme for women and children of Afro-descendant communities,

To ensure representation of Afro-descendant professionals in United Nations specialized agencies, in order to increase the diversity of cultural representation in these agencies.

IMF, World Bank and other multilateral agencies

To ensure in their development activities that they act in conformity with international human rights law and international standards on the rights of Afro-descendant people;

To ensure that any programmes or projects they fund will not interfere with the ability of the Government to meet its own obligations under international human rights law and international standards on the rights of Afro-descendant people;

To ensure the participation of Afro-descendant communities in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of country strategies, development plans and programmes that affect them. This participation must be comprehensive and transparent throughout all stages of the project cycle. Equal consideration should be given to women, the

elderly, persons with disabilities, children and those living with HIV/AIDS within Afro-descendant communities, and they should be allowed to express their own perception of their rights and development needs.

Organization of American States and Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

To organize, in collaboration with the Working Group on Minorities, a seminar for jurists on the reform of the justice system, including ministries, considering the inequalities suffered by Afro-descendants within this system;

To cooperate with the Working Group on Minorities in its activities for the promotion and protection of human rights of Afro-descendant communities in the Americas;

To organize meetings and seminars so as to increase assessment of the human rights situation of Afro-descendant communities with a view to making recommendations to the Governments concerned.

Summit of Presidents of the Rio Group

To include the subject of Afro-descendants as a key issue in any programmes concerning the eradication of poverty and to promote the development of Afro-descendant communities.

Mass media

To create a code of ethics for the media, extending to the Internet, that demands:

The cessation of any discriminatory practices so as to ensure the equal and balanced coverage of issues affecting Afro-descendant communities;

The guarantee that cultural diversity will be reflected in media institutions via the representation of individuals from varied backgrounds and cultures;

The eradication of the proliferation of ideas of racial superiority, justification of racial hatred and all forms of discrimination on the Internet.

Afro-descendant NGOs

To strengthen their existing networks in order to ensure better cooperation with the United Nations and regional human rights systems;

To enhance the capacity-building of grass-root NGOs in linking community and society;

To increase capacity to participate in decisions that affect the well-being and development of communities and to ensure that NGOs are represented on a comparable level to Governments and international organizations.

The Government of Columbia and relevant organizations

Finally, the participants express grave concern at the current crisis in Colombia and call upon the Government and all international and national organizations working to resolve the crisis to pay particular attention to the situation of the Afro-descendant population in Colombia, which is one of the greatest victims of the conflict.

Annex II

List of participants

A. Participants from Latin America

Argentina

Ms. Lucia Dominga Molina
Casa de la Cultura Indo-Afro-Americana

Bolivia

Mr. Juan Angola
Pedro Andaverez Peralta

Brazil

Mr. Carlos Alberto Ivanir dos Santos
Centro de Articulação de Populações Marginalizadas

Ms. Edna Maria Santos Roland
Fala Preta - Organização de Mulheres Negras

Dr. Dora Lucia De Lima Bertulio
Nucleo de Estudos Negros

Ms. Nilza Iraci
Geledés Instituto da Mulher Negra

Ms. Jurema Werneck
CRIOLA (Afro-Brazilian Women's Group)

Chile

Ms. Sonia Salgado Henriquez
Fundacion Oro Negro Chile

Colombia

Mr. Gustavo Makanaky
Movimiento Nacional por los Derechos Humanos de las Comunidades Negras de Colombia - CIMARRON

Mr. Geiler Romana
Asociación de Afro Colombianos Desplazados (AFRODES)

Costa Rica

Mr. Donald Allen
Asociación Proyecto Caribe

Mr. Carlos Minott
Asociación Proyecto Caribe

Ms. Carol Britton
Fundación Arte y Cultura para el Desarrollo

Cuba

Ms. Gisela Arandia Coverrubias
Unión de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba (UNEAC)

Dominican Republic

Mr. Dario Solano
Fundación Afrocomarrón

Ms. Solain Pierre
Moviemento de Mujeres Dominico Haitianas

Guatemala

Ms. Aurelia Nohemi Satuye
ASOMOGAGUA

Haiti

Mr. Viles Alizar
National Coalition for Haitian Rights (NCHR)

Mexico

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